

Living in the Hope of Glory:
The Message of 2 Thessalonians: #2

“God Is Just”
2 Thess. 1:6-12

--CEFC 7/1/18; cf. 6/13/04

Topic: God's justice; the reality of hell
Scripture reading—Rom. 12:17-21

How do you respond when you feel you have been treated badly?

Perhaps you've been insulted or ridiculed,
or in some way humiliated in public or in social media,
or maybe you've been bullied by someone at school or at work--
someone who asserts their power
and always insists on getting their own way.

How does that make you feel?

How do you react?

Quite likely you experience anger—and quite rightly.

Such incivility is a form of injustice, and injustice is evil—
and anger is an appropriate response to evil.

But what do you do with that anger?

Most likely, if you are like me,
you may begin to plan a counterattack.

It's called revenge—

We have an innate urge to get even, don't we?
that desire to get back at that person in some way.

I read this week about a 22-year-old Australian entrepreneur who created a service
called ShipYourEnemiesGlitter.com,

For about eight dollars,

you can send that special person in your life
a letter telling them how horrible they are.

And when the envelop is opened,
bits of sparkly spite in the form of glitter
will burst out and stick to everything around—
as glitter and grudges do.

A rush of customers crashed the company's website within 24 hours.

The site had 2.2 million visitors in its first ten days.

The owner then sold the site for \$85,000.

Revenge in the form of vindictive spite certainly doesn't sound very nice,

but isn't that what fair play demands?

We have this compulsion to settle the score.

Wrongdoing calls for redress,

Justice requires satisfaction. /

The proper term for that is retribution.

Those who harm us deserve to be punished.
Isn't that what justice means—
that people get what they deserve.

So shouldn't we be justified in retaliating when we have been offended?
Shouldn't we seek retaliation? retribution? revenge?

Well, no—not according to Jesus,
not as it pertains to our interpersonal relationships.
In our dealings with other people,
we are not to act as the accuser, prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner all in one.
Jesus said, **“If someone slaps you on the right cheek,
turn to him the other also.”** (Mt. 5:39).
**“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
But I tell you: Love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute you”** (5:43,44).

The Apostle Paul echoes those words of Jesus
in his instructions in his letter to the Romans that we read earlier:
**“Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.
If it is possible, as far as it depends on you,
live at peace with everyone.
Do not take revenge, my friends,
but leave room for God's wrath,
for it is written: “It is mine to avenge;
I will repay,” says the Lord”** (Rom. 12:17-19).

Do you get this?
Do you see what Paul is saying here?
This is critical if we are to live the kind of life Jesus calls us to,
and if we are to obey his teaching
about turning the other cheek
and loving and praying for our enemies.

Paul is not saying that evil doesn't matter,
and that justice is not important.
He is not saying that wrongdoers shouldn't be punished for doing harm.
No, not at all.

What he is saying is that we, in our interpersonal relationships,
are not to take that responsibility on ourselves;
we are not to seek retribution ourselves for the wrongs we suffer.
That job belongs to God.
**“Do not take revenge, my friends,
but leave room for God's wrath,
for it is written: “It is mine to avenge;
I will repay,” says the Lord”** (Rom. 12:17,18).

Now, Paul will move on in chap. 13 to state that the Lord may use the power of the state

as his instrument of judgment—
Paul says that the government can act as **“God’s servant,
his agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer”** (Rom. 13:4).

Now make no mistake,
justice matters to God,
but retribution, revenge, executing justice for ourselves-- that’s not our job.
Instead, we are to exercise grace and forgiveness in all our relationships,
leaving the exercise of justice to God and his appointed agents.
**“It is mine to avenge;
I will repay,” says the Lord.”**

This is a critical principle—
and it is critical especially for the Christian, the follower of Jesus,
because Jesus has told us very clearly that in this world
we can expect to be treated unfairly,
just as he was.
“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also,” he said (Jn. 15:20).

Don’t be surprised if you are mocked or jeered or spat upon;
don’t be shocked if you are considered a fool or shunned as an outsider
don’t be offended if you are accused of
all sorts of intolerant and bigoted behavior.
That’s just what we should expect.
That’s not to say that we should feel free to be obnoxious and rude;
there’s no place for that.
This simply means that even if we do our best to be gracious and kind,
we may not be liked—
“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first,” Jesus said (Jn 15:18).
But we are not to hate back;
we are not to seek revenge;
we are leave the judgment to God. /

This understanding of the Christians’ place in the world
is critical for appreciating what Paul has to say to the Thessalonians
in our passage this morning.

As we saw last week,
from the beginning, the gospel message of Jesus of Nazareth
as the Messiah and Lord
sparked violent opposition in the city of Thessalonica.
Within a few weeks of Paul’s arrival,
a mob had been gathered to rid the city of these unpatriotic troublemakers,
who declared their allegiance to a rival king.
These followers of Jesus refused to worship the local gods,
putting the whole city at risk.
It was clear that Paul and his fellow missionaries were disturbing the social order
and had to be eliminated.

In response to these threats, Paul did leave,

but the residents the city who had responded in faith to Paul's preaching—
the new converts to Christ—
they stayed.

And as followers of this rival king
they would certainly be subject to persecution and harsh treatment--
unjust treatment.

Paul was rightly concerned about them—

Would they endure in their faith in such a hostile environment?

He had his doubts.

But through Timothy his messenger, Paul received the good news
that these young Christians were, in fact, thriving.

In the opening words of his second letter,

he thanks God that their faith in God was increasing

and their love for another was growing.

He writes, "**among God's churches**

we boast about your perseverance and faith

in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring" (1:4).

Now Paul wants to encourage such perseverance in the face of persecution

by reminding these believers of the principle we've just been considering.

He says it in v. 6 of our passage--

"God is just:

He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you

and give relief to you who are troubled."

The Apostle encourages them with the certainty

that God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous.

This principle of *divine retribution and reward* holds the key

to an enduring faith in the face of unjust treatment.

This is what enables the believer to live in love

when they are the objects of hate.

"God is just:

He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you

and give relief to you who are troubled."

It's really quite simple, isn't it?—

God is just—

he will punish the wicked and reward the righteous.

It's true--justice requires **retribution**.

Those who do wrong deserve to be punished.

There ought to be a "pay back" for what has been done.

We think of "righting the scales of justice."

That's the fundamental principle that stands behind the notion

that the punishment should fit the crime.

But many people today don't like that idea of retribution.

They think any idea of retribution is primitive and morally repulsive;
they equate it with an ugly form of vindictive revenge.
They say that all punishment should be restorative rather than retributive—
correction and rehabilitation should always be our sole aim.
"An eye for an eye" just makes the whole world go blind.

And on a personal level that's true—
As I said, according to Jesus we are not to seek retribution.
On a personal level, we are not to pay back evil with evil but with good.

But what about God?
How does this apply to him?
What should he do?

The Bible makes it very clear—
"Vengeance is mine; I will repay," say the Lord.
Is that primitive?
Is that unjust?

I am afraid that people who think this way are just confusing categories—
they are replacing God's justice with God's grace.
They are not the same thing.
Justice gives a person what they deserve—
grace doesn't.

God extends his grace through the gospel of Jesus Christ,
but when that offer of the gospel is rejected,
all that is left is justice.

And even God's grace is grounded in the justice of the cross of Christ.
There on the cross God's justice is satisfied by the sacrifice of another.
On the cross, Jesus represents all those who are joined to him in faith--
he acts as our substitute,
there he dies the death we deserve.

Paul says in his letter to the Romans (3:26)
that in Christ's horrible death on a cross
God demonstrates his justice,
even while, in his grace,
he justifies those who have faith in Christ.

You see, in the end, no one gets away with anything—
either you pay the penalty for your wickedness,
or Christ pays that penalty for you.

God demonstrates his justice on the day Jesus died on the cross,
but Paul wants to assure the Thessalonians
that God's justice will also be demonstrated on another day—
that final day of judgment.

And God must demonstrate his justice in judgment.
If God does not bring justice,

if there is no judgment,
then ultimately what do the very notions of good and evil mean?
What does it matter how you live?

God is just, and he will judge.

And that judgment includes retribution—

paying back to people what they deserve.

There is nothing uncertain about what Paul says here.

We may not like what it says,

but our passage is very clear.

It is clear, first, in declaring **who** is to receive this retribution from God—

Look at v. 8—“**[the Lord] will punish those who do not know God**

and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

To know God is not simply an acknowledgement that God exists.

It is not simply the reciting of a creed

or the ceremonial tip of the cap we offer God

through going to church or saying a prayer before meals,

or putting a few bucks in the offering.

To know God is to enter into a relationship with him,

to know him is to trust him,

to know him is to love him,

to know him is to obey him and to worship him.

That is our first and foremost moral duty—

to treat God as the great and glorious God that he is.

Paul says that if we do not honor God as God,

we are all without excuse.

Our problem is not that we lack an apprehension that God exists,

but that we suppress the knowledge of God we do have.

Paul writes in Rom. 1 that “**Although we know God,**

we neither glorify God or give him thanks,

but exchange the truth of God for a lie

and worship and serve created things rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:20,21,25).

And we demonstrate that we do not know him

when we do not recognize the One he has sent--

and we do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

The gospel is this—

God's Son has come into the world,

he died for sins,

he rose from the grave,

and he will come again in glory as Lord of all.

And God “**now commands all people everywhere to repent**”

and to receive the Lord Jesus.

“**For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice**

by the man he has appointed” (Acts 17:30,31).

John 3:16-- **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."**

And the offer of the gospel is not simply an invitation to be received—
it is also a command to be obeyed—
Come to Jesus Christ—turn from living apart from him,
and receive him, trust him, submit to him
as your Savior and your Lord.

Those who refuse what God has offered,
those who reject what God has commanded—
will, in the justice of God, be punished.
Like it or not, that's what the Bible says.

And how will they be punished?

Again, Paul does not mince words here;
he doesn't sugar-coat reality--
Look at v. 9—"They will be punished with everlasting destruction
and shut out from the presence of the Lord
and from the majesty of his power."

We can't say exactly what this involves,
but this punishment is what is commonly referred to as "hell."

The Bible offers various images to seek to convey something of the nature of hell's terror.

In some places, hell is pictured as a place of burning fire,
emphasizing its physical torment.¹
Jesus talked about hell as that place where "**their worm does not die
and the fire is not quenched**" (Mk. 9:48).

In other places, in contrast to heaven which is a place full of life,
hell is characterized as a place of death.
John in the Revelation refers to the lake of fire as "**the second death**."²
The "**second death**" (21:8) is a condition, a state of existence,
rather than an event.

This is seen by the description of that "**lake of burning sulfur**" in Revelation 20:10,
that place of the "**second death**,"
as a place of torment "**day and night for ever and ever**."

Hell is a place of death,
and it is also a place of destruction—
emphasizing the corruption of our humanity found there.

Destruction is where the wide road leads, Jesus says (Matt. 7:13);
it is what happens to the house built on sand (Luke 6:49);
it is what is prepared for the objects of God's wrath (Rom. 9:22);

¹Mark 9:43,48; Jude 7; cf. Rev. 21:8—"a fiery lake of burning sulfur".

²Rev. 20:14; 21:8; cf. 2:11; 20:6

and it is the destiny of the enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:19).

In our passage this morning, Paul describes hell as “**everlasting destruction.**”

The “**destruction**” referred to here is best understood

not as a cessation of existence,

as if the final state of unbelievers was annihilation.

In the history of the church, until very recently,

only a few theologians and smaller sects have taken such a view.³

It is better to understand the concept of “destruction”⁴ in the Bible

as describing the ruining of something

such that it becomes useless for its intended purpose.

“Destruction” is used to describe things like burst wineskins,

or spoiled food, or lost sheep.

We might talk of a car being “totaled”—totally destroyed.

It doesn’t cease to exist;

it just no longer functions as it was intended to.

The punishment of destruction means that these people become

less than fully human.

In some sense, they no longer embody of the image of God their Creator.

The way Paul expands the description of punishment in this passage

supports the notion that this destruction refers to a continuing state.⁵

As one commentator has observed,

“It makes little sense to describe people who have been annihilated

as being separate from the presence of God.”⁶

Since God is the source of light,

the eternal separation from God Paul speaks of here

reflects what is said about hell elsewhere in the Bible

as a place of darkness—“**outer darkness**” (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30)

or “**blackest darkness**” (2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13).

Those who reject the eternal God will be eternally aware of what they have done,

³Annihilationism was defended by one fourth-century apologist (Arnobius of Sicca [d. 330]), but it was condemned by the Second Council of Constantinople (553) and the Fifth Lateran Council (1513). It was rare, if non-existent, during the Middle Ages through the Reformation period. It is now held by both Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists. This view was even held by one early Free Church Leader, J. G. Princell (1845-1915), but it was repudiated explicitly in the 1950 EFCA Statement of Faith. It has been embraced more recently by a number of Evangelicals, particularly in British circles.

⁴Destruction can be expressed both by *apollymi* (cf. also the related noun *apôleia*) and by *olethron*. These two words occur together in 1 Tim. 6:9: “People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin (*olethron*) and destruction (*apôleia*).”

⁵The intertestamental Jewish book 4 *Maccabees* also uses the term *olethron* in a similar context of divine judgment which supports enduring existence in a state of punishment (4 Macc. 10:15; cf. 9:9; 12:12; 13:15).

⁶Douglas J. Moo, “Paul on Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), p. 108.

for Paul tells us, they will endure utter alone-ness,
shut out from the presence
of the One who is the source of all life and all love.

Jesus spoke of that day when many will come to him and say,
**'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name,
and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'**
**Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you.
Depart from me, you evildoers!' (Matt. 7:22,23)**

"Depart from me"—

"Depart from me, forever."
Can there be any more frightful words?
Does the thought of hearing such words send shivers down your spine?

"Depart from me"—

**"They will be punished with everlasting destruction
and shut out from the presence of the Lord
and from the majesty of his power"**

It is an awful picture.

But in that verdict, God will be seen to be perfectly just—
for isn't that what those people wanted all along—
simply to be left alone—
to live without God,
to be their own God,
owning their own souls,
ruling their own world.
God says, it shall be so.

As C. S. Lewis put it:

sin is a human being saying to God throughout their life,
"Go away and leave me alone."
Hell is God's answer--"You may have your wish."⁷
In that sense, hell is the ultimate testament to human freedom.
But that world of their choosing
will be a world of one and one only—
in which they will exist alone forever.

This is how those who do not know God and obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus
will be punished in the solitary confinement that is hell.

Let's be clear--

Hell is not full of people with humble and repentant hearts
who long to worship God in heaven.

In hell, the sinner's hardened heart will become harder still.

You see, heaven and hell are simply the destinations
of the roads that people are already on in this life—
They are the confirmation and intensification of what has already begun.

⁷"There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it." *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 72.

In heaven, the transforming power of the gospel
culminates in hearts that never again desire to choose evil,
In hell, the corrupting power of sin culminates in hearts
that never again desire to do good or to worship the God of all goodness.

This punishment of God will go on forever
simply because the rebellion of sinners against the rule of God
will never cease. /

Paul doesn't gloat over this fact,
he simply presents it as sober truth—
truth that reflects the truth that God is just,
and in the exercise of his justice,
he will bring the whole world to judgment.
**"[the Lord] will punish those who do not know God
and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus."
"They will be punished with everlasting destruction
and shut out from the presence of the Lord
and from the majesty of his power"**

The message of the Bible is very clear—
God has created us for himself—each one of us—
to live before him in faith, love, and obedience.
And the most grievous evil imaginable is our rejection of God as God,
our refusal to believe that what he says is true and right
and to live accordingly.

This is the central moral issue of the universe—will you let God be God?
Your eternal destiny hinges on it.
God will punish those who refuse to know him as their God. /

Friends, I can't expound this passage without making it very clear
that if you are here today
and you have not yet turned to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith,
you are in the gravest danger.

What Paul describes here is what you deserve,
and it is what you will experience,
if you do not cry out to God for his mercy,
and receive the gift of his forgiving grace found in Jesus Christ.

You must obey the gospel—
You must.
Your eternal destiny depends on it.
I urge you to do it today.
Please talk to me or some other Christian here today and get this right.
For there will come a day—a day of judgment,
a day of retribution.

And **when** will this take place--this just retribution?
v. 7—"This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven
in blazing fire with his powerful angels. . . .
v. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction . . .
10 on the day [Christ] comes"

There will come a day—
a day of judgment,
a day of vindication—
a day when all that has been proclaimed
will be demonstrated to be true.
A day when the Son of God who first came as a babe in a manger,
will come again in all his glory—
in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

And for those who are persecuted,
who suffer for their faith,
this is not a day to fear, but a day to anticipate with hope.

Hope is what enables us to hold on in the present when things look so bad,
and you feel so powerless,
and the anti-Christian forces of this world
seem to have the upper hand.

Persecutors seem to be getting their way.
Blasphemers are celebrated,
the devout are defamed.

Why stick with it?
Why not give up and give in?

Because of that blessed hope—
that day when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven.
He will set things right—
justice will be done.

And on that day,
the Lord will not only come with retribution for the wicked,
he will also come with reward for the righteous—
for those who know him and love the day of his appearing.

**"God is just:
He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you
and give relief to you who are troubled,"**

"Relief"—the Greek word is ἄνεσιν—like the headache medicine.
The word means freedom from trouble and anxiety and pain.
That's what is promised to those who remain faithful.

But the promise of reward is much greater than the mere cessation of distress.
It involves a participation in the very glory of God—
For on that day, v. 10--

the Lord will come **“to be glorified in his holy people
and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.”**

And in v. 12, Paul prays that
**“the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you,
and you in him,”**

And in 2:14, he writes,
**“[God] called you to this through our gospel,
that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Our reward is to participate in some mysterious way in the very glory of God in Christ.

What does this mean?

Again, C. S. Lewis, who had such a wonderful imagination,
tried to help us with this difficult concept of sharing in God’s glory.

Think for a moment of a painting—a grand landscape by Turner, perhaps.

Picture the rugged and majestic mountains in the background,
the green of a mountain meadow in the foreground
with a mountain stream running through it.

Or perhaps you might think of a beautiful field of sunflowers or poppies
painted by van Gough.

The beauty of the painting draws you—it’s majestic,
so much so that you feel a longing to be there—
not just to be spectator, but to actually be a part of that scene—
smelling the sweet scent of the flowers
or tasting the cool, clean water of the stream.

So it will be when Christ returns in glory—
that glory beyond any artist’s imagination will draw us in—
and we will participate in that glory,
in some mysterious way, we will become a part of it.

That’s our hope—
that’s what is held before us as our reward.

That is what is to sustain us during the dark days of life on this earth,
when it seems that we are forgotten and abandoned—
but we are not—not by our God,
for there will come a day when all will be revealed,
and the Lord will appear in glory,
and we who have believed will share in that glory.

That’s why Paul can say,
**‘I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing
with the glory that will be revealed in us’** (Rom. 8:18).

So, we must ask, **how ought we to live?**

Paul prays for the Thessalonians in the light of this hope—

v.11—"With this in mind, we constantly pray for you,
that our God may count you worthy of his calling,
and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours
and every act prompted by your faith."

Our responsibility is to live in a way worthy of God's calling in our lives—
for he has called us to himself through the gospel of Christ.
He has called us into his family and adopted as his sons and daughters.
He called us to live holy lives,
lives of love—
lives that display the family likeness.

We are to live in a manner worthy of that calling—
a manner that brings honor and glory to the name of the Lord.

Supreme Court justices have been very much in the news this week,
and I think about the honor it would be to be called to serve
as a clerk of a Supreme Court judge.
I know I would give all I could to be deemed worthy of such a responsibility.
And my job as clerk would be to make my boss look good.
My central objective would be to see his or her opinions honored.

Well, we have a much higher calling than that—
our calling is from God—
we are called to serve the King of kings.
Our calling is make him look good—
to see his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Our calling is to bring him honor and glory in this world.

How can we do such a thing?
Only through his power—that's why Paul prays—
and that why we need to pray.
God's power alone can fulfill any good purpose we may have
or any act prompted by our faith.

None of this is possible, as Paul says in the last verse in our passage,
apart from "the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Growing faith,
increasing love,
enduring hope—
it all depends on the grace of our God
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's why Paul thanks God for it,
and that's why Paul prays for it—
and that's why, when it appears in his people,
God is glorified through it,
because it all reflects his grace.

May the Lord be glorified through us.

In preparation for the Lord's Supper,
may our servers to come forward as we pray—

Lord,
Give us a confident hope that you are indeed just—

And with the prospect of that judgment
May we cling to Christ as our Savior.

Communion—

We come to this table

where in a visible way the gospel is set before us.

The bread and the cup speak to us of the body of Christ given for us

and the blood of Christ shed for us—

They speak of the cross—

where God's justice and his mercy meet.

May this glorious truth come home to our hearts afresh—

In Jesus Christ God's wrath against our sin is satisfied—

God is shown to be just even as he justifies sinners like us.

We are judged in Christ,

and in his resurrected life we are pronounced not guilty—

we are given new life—eternal life—

assured of living in the presence of Christ forever.

If this is true of you—

if you have professed that truth before God's people—

which is what baptism does—

then take, eat and drink.

If this is not true of you—

I urge you to reflect of what it means to stand

before a holy God—

alone, without a savior.

Will he say, "Depart from me! I never knew you"?

—

**Living in the Hope of Glory:
The Message of 2 Thessalonians: #2
July 1, 2018**

**God Is Just:
Retribution and Reward
1 Thess. 1:6-12**

No one likes to be treated unjustly, but Jesus warned his followers to expect just that. "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also," he said (Jn. 15:20).

How are we to stand up to such mistreatment? By remembering that "God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled." This principle of *divine retribution and reward* holds the key to an enduring faith in the face of unjust treatment.

I. Who will receive retribution? (v. 8)

*"those who do not know God
and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus."*

II. How will they be punished? (v. 9)

Eternal destruction and separation from God

III. When will they be punished? (v. 10)

On the day of Christ's coming in glory

IV. What be the believer's reward? (v. 12)

A share in God's glory

V. How, then, ought we to live? (v. 11)

Worthy of God's calling

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17)

Sermon Discussion:

“God Is Just”

2 Thess. 1:6-12

- Can you think of an example of a time in your life when you felt the urge to retaliate against someone for something they had done to you? Why did you feel that way? What did you do with that urge?
- How can the principle of divine retribution and reward make a difference in the way you respond to people who may offend you or hurt you?
- How do you feel when you hear the punishment that Paul describes in v. 9? What images does it bring into your mind?
- What do the Gospels tell us about Jesus' belief regarding the existence of hell?
- Is it wrong for God to judge human beings? How does such judgment give dignity to our lives?
- What would make eternal punishment just for temporal wrongdoing?
- Reflect on v. 12. What does it mean for you to share in Christ's glory?
- Take some time to pray Paul's prayer of vv. 11-12 for one another and for our church.